

**REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 7, 2011**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, May 17, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console and Chairperson Hemmann.

Absent: Councilor Montinieri.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager, Nancy Stilwell, Director of Social and Youth Services, Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks & Recreation and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

Chairperson Hemmann reported that there was an Executive Session held at 6:30 p.m. prior to this meeting to discuss CRRA contract negotiations, and there will be an Executive Session following this meeting to discuss personnel matters.

Councilor Hurley led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

PROCLAMATIONS Chairperson Hemmann read a proclamation for the Irish Person of the Year, Thomas Gworek, and a Proclamation for the Parade Marshal at the Hartford St. Patrick's Day Parade, representing Wethersfield, Johnny Murphy.

Councilor Roberts wanted to recognize Maria Sullivan and Rynagh Peak, co-chairs of the St. Patrick's Day Parade. She noted that the parade costs approximately \$50,000 so fundraisers are held to help defray the costs.

HEARINGS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gary Decko, 20 Casey Lane, commented on the parcel of land behind 20 Casey Lane that the Town is considering selling, and suggested perhaps Council members can look at the property when it is extremely wet. He also asked if there was someone he could contact to come out to look at the land when it is extremely wet.

Jeff Bridges responded that Mr. Decko can contact him.

Mr. Decko asked that once he contacts Jeff Bridges, how long would it take for someone to come out to look at the land when it is very wet.

Councilor McAlister responded that he had a conversation with Gary Decko and informed him that the Public Works Committee was going to be looking at all the property, but was waiting for the snow to melt to get an appreciation of the property. Gary Decko asked if it was possible for the Council members to review the land together and Councilor McAlister informed him that there were regulations that needed to be followed in order to get Council members together.

Gary Decko confirmed that he had spoken with Councilor McAlister. He also explained that the pictures that he provided do not reflect the worst conditions it can be. In addition to the water that runs out of the pipes, the land is wetlands.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if the property in the back is considered flood plains.

Gary Decko responded that he has been told that it is in the flood plains.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if this property would flood if on a 50 or 100 year flood plain.

Gary Decko responded yes.

Deputy Mayor Console asked how long Gary Decko has lived at this property.

Gary Decko responded that he has lived there for 33 years.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, thanked the Town Manager for sending the list of tax exempt properties in Wethersfield, but noted that the list does not indicate the size of the property, but he hadn't requested this. He commented that the Town should either sell or give away the property. He also objects to selling property that can support a home because in a short period of time there may be children in those homes that will be going to school and any tax money paid gets evaporated into educating the children. He also commented that the reason the Town bought the Wilkus Farm property was to prevent homes from being built on it. Anyone who voted for the purchase of Wilkus property could also be considered as anti-family. He also commented on an issue, brought up at the last meeting, the Wethersfield Housing Authority. This property was included on the list given to him by Jeff Bridges. This is a very extensive group of homes and property. He noted that there are 187 children coming from the Housing Authority and the cost to educate these children is \$2.6 million. The owner of the Housing Authority isn't obligated to pay any taxes because they are exempt. Mr. Young also noted that if there is an opportunity for Governor Malloy to visit Wethersfield, he would like an opportunity to read off some ideas that he has. He feels that there needs to be accountability at the State Capitol.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, commented on Thomas Gworek's generosity. He commented that the school board is coming in with an 8% increase in the budget and he hopes that this

Council makes a realistic decision. He also commented that he was asked by someone if his support for Wilkus Farm was for preservation and quality of life. He responded, "absolutely." He was also asked if it was for any other reason and his answer was absolutely not. He commented that he is motivated by what's good for the town, he does not buckle under pressure and he feels that the Town did not overpay for the Wilkus property.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilor Manousos reported for the Redevelopment Committee that met and the focus of the redevelopment project has been narrowed down to just the Weight Watcher's building for a variety of reasons. Councilor Manousos also reported for the Budget & Finance Committee which had a productive meeting on Saturday, March 5 with many of the Town departments. The department heads were asked to look at the budgets and to analyze what needed to be done to come in at zero, what the sacrifices would be, what changes would need to be made and how it would impact the services and program. He explained that Council will then go back and see if these are things that can be done without depleting department staff. Councilor Manousos noted that two additional meetings have been scheduled.

Councilor Kotkin thanked the staff for providing their material to Council.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilor McAlister suggested that if it is not possible for the Council members to get together to look at property, perhaps the Town Engineer can take pictures of the situation or perhaps have three Council members go to review the property and to handle it with some flexibility.

Deputy Mayor Console commented that he is working diligently to get the appropriate calculations for the minimum budget requirements for the Board of Education and others. He commented also that there are several different ways of calculating the budget. He is also looking into the minimum expenditure requirements on the margin of compliance percentage which has something to do with the calculations together with DRG factor.

Councilor McAlister noted to Deputy Mayor Console that if the Town does not fund to that level, it will be interesting to see what the Town gives up.

Councilor Kotkin thanked George Ruhe for joining him in Mayors' hour last week. He noted that he received a phone call from a resident on Pine Lane who inquired as to when that street will be repaved. Councilor Kotkin asked to know the schedule.

Jeff Bridges responded that he will get this information to Councilor Kotkin.

Councilor Manousos reported that during the Public Comment section at the last Town Council meeting, he was asked to get some facts related to the assertion made by Robert Young, who also made reference to it again at tonight's meeting. It is along the lines that we don't need any more homes, families or children in Town because it costs us \$14,000 per student to educate them. This comment was made in the context of selling off some property and even the reason for buying the Wilkus Farm. The other comment referenced the 187 students living in the Housing Authority property, costing the Town \$14,000 to educate each child and the owners of the property should be paying taxes. He noted that he took the time to get his facts straight; he has done some research and thought he would share it with everyone. The comments made were offensive to him then and they are now because he doesn't believe they are based on fact. When he did his own research and looking at the budgets, it is simple to calculate that the Board of Education costs \$13,000 to \$14,000 a student if you take the gross budget and divide it by the number of students. But this is a gross oversimplification of the cost of truly educating a student a marginal increase of one student in a new house. He reviewed the budget, took out all the non-student related costs and what is left is a variable cost to educate an additional student in this Town in the existing school system. He explained that 90% of the budget is basically fixed. The Town owns the buildings and there are teachers' contracts, so what is left is basically variable costs and he can list them off if anyone is interested. A home with one child, basically costs, on a marginal basis, a little less than \$1,400/year for a student. If that is applied to a new development, a new house, town expenses that are marginal to each house, like maintenance of roads, snow plowing, lights, garbage removal, under the same analysis, it costs approximately \$500/home. Councilor Manousos analyzed that if a new home generates \$6,000 to \$10,000 and a student costs the Town under \$2,000, he feels this is a good return. He noted that perhaps the Town should be advocating for more families to move into Town because it is not a negative impact on taxes, but a positive one. He noted that perhaps Councilor McAlister could share some information on household spending patterns and demographics which further support why the Town should be attracting families as economic development rather than push families away. Councilor Manousos also noted that the second comment had to do with the owner of the Wethersfield Housing Authority should be paying taxes because the children living there are going to our schools without paying taxes. He found out that this property is owned by the State and the Town receives \$100,000, payment in lieu of taxes [PILOT], from the State of Connecticut to the Town, so that is contributing \$500 to \$600 per student. The point is people are throwing numbers around generically. It does a disservice and he felt it was worthy enough to research it and let people know this information. He also noted that this same argument would not be used against the elderly because they receive a tax break and we are not going to say that the elderly need to pay more because they are not paying their full share of Dial-A-Ride or Meals-On-Wheels. Councilor Manousos noted that we are a community, accept everyone as they are and if someone needs a helping hand, that's what we do. We are not alone in this. Every community in this State has a housing authority, has low income housing, and has a senior population.

Councilor McAlister noted his support of Councilor Manousos' analysis and noted that if one was to look at any research of spending by age per household, the numbers show ages 36 to 49 spend close to \$42,000/year and those 65 years and older spend \$32,000/year. The tax revenue in generation but also local economic spend whether it's for food and drink or travel.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Jeff Bridges reported that there had been a conversation about sidewalks at the last meeting and he reviewed the calls for service, number of tickets issued and other enforcement actions. Twenty five tickets were issued, 200 calls for police for sidewalk issues which were resolved once the officer arrived. There were four areas in which a contractor did the work and the property owner will be billed for the service.

COUNCIL ACTION

Deputy Mayor Console moved **"TO APPOINT CARMELO AMODDIO, 62 SURREY DRIVE, TO THE PARKS & RECREATION BOARD, FROM AN ALTERNATE TO A FULL MEMBER, FOR THE PERIOD 03-07-2011 TO 06-30-2014, TO APPOINT DANIEL MONTANO, 435 OLD RESERVOIR ROAD, TO THE SHADE TREE COMMISSION, FOR THE PERIOD 03-07-2011 TO 06-30-2012, TO APPOINT PETER GARDOW, 60 GRISWOLD ROAD, TO THE WETHERSFIELD HIGH SCHOOL/HANMER BUILDING COMMITTEE, FOR THE PERIOD 03-07-2011 TO COMPLETION,"** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

Deputy Mayor Console, moved **"TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO APPLY FOR AND ACCEPT, IF AWARDED, A GRANT FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE EXPANSION OF DIAL-A-RIDE SERVICES AND TO NEGOTIATE AND SIGN A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE TOWNS OF NEWINGTON AND ROCKY HILL TO PROVIDE A TRI-TOWN MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICE,"** seconded by Councilor Roberts.

Nancy Stilwell reported during the 2005 Connecticut Legislative Session, Public Act 05-4 allocated new funding for municipalities to expand dial-a-ride services. Under the formula grant, Wethersfield was eligible to apply for \$37,470 in funds. On February 21, 2006 Town Council authorized an application for the funds through a joint application with the Towns of Newington and Rocky Hill to provide medical transportation five days per week, instead of four days, to an expanded area that includes Bloomfield, West Hartford, Farmington, East Hartford and New Britain. By combining resources with the Towns of Newington and Rocky Hill, the total grant

was \$95,000 for services to residents of the three Towns. The application was successful and the expanded service was implemented in July of 2006. Wethersfield's Department of Social and Youth Services, utilizing the current service provider, is the coordinating agency. This expanded service has been available to residents of the three Towns since July 2006.

Staff was notified by CRCOG that applications for the grant, in the same amount, will be accepted for next year. Wethersfield's share will again be \$37,470. The actual application will be on behalf of the Wethersfield, Newington and Rocky Hill in the amount of \$95,000. Town Council must authorize the application for and acceptance of the grant as well as the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with Newington and Rocky Hill. Town staff received an award from CRCOG for this program, as an example of regional cooperation.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

BIDS

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO AWARD THE BID FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF WILLARD POOL FILTERS TO BROCK ENTERPRISES IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$52,000,”** seconded by Deputy Mayor Console..

Jeff Bridges reported on February 7, 2011, Town Council authorized the use of funding from the Parks and Recreation Escrow fund to replace the filter tanks at Willard Pool. Staff immediately solicited sealed bids in order to complete the work prior to the summer. The Willard Pool Filter replacement bid was opened on Thursday, February 24 2011, with six very competitive bids. After careful review and follow up, staff is recommending award to the lowest responsible bidder, Brock Enterprises. The filter replacement amount is \$42,000, which is significantly lower than the estimates of \$88,377. The work will entail some valve replacements which could add \$5,000 to \$10,000 to the project cost. The valves will be evaluated throughout the installation process.

Kathy Bagley, reported that the project architect verified the bid pricing and the vendor's ability to complete the work.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO AWARD A CONTRACT TO BUCKLEY ENERGY GROUP FOR THE PURCHASE OF #2 FUEL OIL AND TO DENNIS K. BURKE FOR THE PUCHASE OF DIESEL, AS NEEDED, UTILIZING THE FUNDS THAT ARE APPROPRIATED IN THE FISCAL YEAR 2011-2012 GENERAL FUND BUDGET,”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Jeff Bridges reported as a member of the Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), the Town participates in the Capital Region Purchasing Council, which improves the chances of better pricing due to the combined volume of goods or services being purchased by the participating municipalities. The Town participates in the bid for #2 Fuel Oil and Diesel Oil through CRCOG to improve our pricing. Buckley Energy Group is the lowest responsible bidder for #2 fuel oil with a bid price of \$3.1360 per gallon, an increase of \$0.7742 per gallon over last year's price of \$2.3618 per gallon. Dennis K. Burke is the lowest responsible bidder for diesel with a bid price of \$3.0877 per gallon, an increase of \$0.7061 per gallon over last year's price of \$2.3816 per gallon. This bid is for the 2011-12 budget year; however I am requesting that you award the bid with a funding contingency based on next year's budget, so that we may lock in the prices. The bid price is firm for the one year contract period.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if this is reviewed every six months.

RaeAnn Palmer responded that it is usually bid for a year but because this bid is on the calendar year as opposed to the fiscal year, the Town is awarding for the balance of this year and for half of next year.

Chairperson Hemmann commented that this is a volatile topic.

RaeAnn Palmer responded that it is. When the Town was locked in, an hour later it was learned that the prices for both went up 11 cents a gallon. She noted that the manager felt it was a good idea to lock in and she agreed.

Councilor Kotkin noted that assuming diesel prices are going to stay high for some time to come, and Council has talked periodically about using compressed natural gas for some of the heavy fleet, he asked if that should be looked at in the future.

RaeAnn Palmer commented to Jeff Bridges that this would be a good idea to look into. She noted that there is a filling station in Glastonbury and Rocky Hill.

Councilor Kotkin commented that gas prices haven't been as high as they are right now and it's not likely that it will change much.

RaeAnn Palmer noted that it needs to be looked at as to whether the Town has accessibility, for instance, when the plows are out plowing and need to fill up. She also noted that she does not know the mileage on compressed gas vehicles.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

None.

MINUTES

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 22, 2011”** seconded by Councilor Kotkin. .

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilor McAlister abstained. The motion passed 7-0-1.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gus Colonotonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, commented on the purchase of the Wilkus Farm property, budgets and progress on Morrison Avenue.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, commented on Jeff Bridges’ comments about looking into gas technology for vehicles makes sense but not to lose sight of the previous experiences the Town has had, maybe they weren’t good, but there has been a lot of technological developments in recent years, so it is worthwhile. He commented on Councilor’s Manousos’ evaluation and cautioned people about throwing numbers around without appreciating the facts.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, noted Councilors Manousos and McAlister’s comments, and requested to see their analysis.

Councilor Manousos responded that he is welcome to it.

Robert Young commented that regardless, it still costs \$14,000 to educate each child, per Wethersfield’s Board of Education. He also shared his thoughts of Governor Malloy’s town hall visits and commented that state bonding should be terminated, end collective bargaining and tax exemptions.

At 8:05 p.m., Councilor Roberts, moved **“TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PERSONNEL MATTERS”** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

All Councilors present voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0. Jeff Bridges, Town Manager and Labor Attorney, Ken Plumb, were present. No motions were made and no votes were taken during executive session.

At 8:38 p.m., Councilor Roberts moved **“TO LEAVE EXECUTIVE SESSION”** seconded by Councilor Manousos. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:38 p.m., Councilor Roberts moved **"TO ADJOURN THE MEETING"** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk
*Approved by vote of Council
March 21, 2011*